Western Europe Review

31 January 1979

State Department review completed

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Revising Britain's labor laws and curbing trade union power probably will be the dominant issues in the runup to a general election that is likely to come this spring but must be held by the middle of November. The recent rash of strikes and industrial disruption, the collapse of Prime Minister Callahgan's pay policy, possible confrontation over future contract negotiations, and the threat of a worsening economy in 1979, will provide the framework of debate. But these issues, as important as they are in themselves, are also catalysts for a debate over the fundamental questions of how unions have functioned in the past and by what rules they will operate in the future. Although the problem can be traced back to well before World War II, it has grown significantly during the past decade. Both the preelection debate and the outcome of the election will have an important impact on how the question is resolved.

Now You See It, Now You Don't: 1969-1974

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In 1969, after nearly four years of government attempts to enforce incomes policies and restrictions on union power, Labor Prime Minister Harold Wilson proposed legislation that was intended to establish a clear legal framework for union activity. But Callaghan, who was Home Secretary at the time, opposed the legislation and, with the cooperation of the leadership of the Trades Union Congress (TUC), swung most of the Cabinet to his point of view and the bill was killed. The same basic legislation surfaced again, however, when the Conservative government of Edward Heath took office in 1970 and passed the Industrial Relations Act the following year. The Act, which was an attempt to outline the responsibilities of management, trade unions, employers associations, and individual employees, established firm procedures for industrial relations, including a governmentrun conciliation service, a cooling-off period before a

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25X1	strike, legally binding collective bargaining, registration of union rules, optional union membership, and, with some exceptions, a prohibitant on closed shops and sympathy strikes.			
25X1	The legislation, which was passed over TUC and Labor Party opposition, was coupled with renewed efforts to enforce anti-inflationary incomes policies. This led to a series of bitter and violent confrontations between the government and the trade unions. Strikes were launched by several unions in support of wage settlements that violated government guidelines, new leftleaning leaders were elected in the country's two largest unions, the Industrial Relations Court set by the Act was condemned and ignored by the unions, union assets were confiscated, and some union leaders were served with arrest orders. In November 1973, when the coal miners staged their second work stoppage in two years, the government declared a state of emergency. When negotiations collapsed, Heath dissolved Parliament and called an early general election in February 1974 which his party lost.			
	Buying the Peace: The Rise of the Social Contract			
	The Labor government under Wilson and later Callaghan gradually changed direction from that followed by the earlier Wilson government. The Industrial Relations Act and, more importantly, the philosophy behind it, had been rejected already by the party. By 1972 the composition of the party's National Executive followed the leftward swing in union leadership and the unions received official party support to defy the Act. The emphasis on nationalization and socialist programs was more pronounced than anytime since immediately after World War II.			
	Against this backdrop, Callaghan, who was determined to end the confrontation, promote industrial peace, and control the spiraling inflation, became Prime Minister in April 1976. The result was a "social contract," based to some extent on the continental model, that was intended to foster cooperation among the government, employers,			

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and unions.

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Initially, the social contract proved effective. Strikes subsided and inflation, which had reached nearly 26 percent a year in 1975, was cut in half by the end of the following year--partly because a formal deal with the trade unions helped keep wage increases down. traditional structural and operational links between the Labor government and the trade unions were strengthened. Union leaders had constant access to the upper echelons of government and influenced policy. The last vestiges of the Industrial Relations Act was repealed by 1976 and replaced by the Trade Union and Labor Relations Act, which had been introduced originally in late 1974 under The rules governing trade union activity were Wilson. liberalized beyond what they had been before passage of the Industrial Relations Act; they now ensured union immunity from certain civil action and contract obligations and encouraged secondary picketing.

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Losing the Peace: The Decline of the Social Contract

During the 1977-78 pay round, however, the social contract began to show signs of disintegration, and during the present series of contract negotiations it has fallen apart completely. In fact, the harmony and cooperation between the trade unions and the Labor government that followed the fall of the Heath government had only masked serious problems in industrial relations. Although basic and long-term changes in British industrial society underlie the problems, the difficulties in the present relationship between the "industrial and political wings of the labor movement"--between the TUC and the Labor Party--can be traced to two reasons. First, the close cooperation between the Labor government and the upper echelons of the trade union leadership--especially the leaders of the TUC--is not a guarantee that the behavior of individual unions and the rank and file will conform. Thus, during the 1977-78 pay round, union leadership was still able to acquiesce informally in the government's largely successful anti-inflationary wage guidelines and to finesse a decision of the 1977 TUC annual conference to reject the pay policy in favor of free collective bargaining. The same resolution passed the 1978 conference, but this time the union leadership, reacting to increasing pressure from below, rejected the fourth round of incomes policy generally and the average 5-percent limit on wage increases specifically. Second, sharp contradiction within the

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body of labor law and regulation over the past decade have confused the roles of the unions, employers, and the government and blurred their relationships. A period like the present, when policy interests and options diverge markedly, discourages union discipline and fuels antagonism among the government, employers, and the unions that is absent or at least less obvious during periods, such as the early days of the social contract, when policies are more uniformly accepted.

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The current series of contract negotiations and attempts to enforce the pay policy, which began last August, have been the most difficult for the Labor government since it took office in 1974. The wave of strikes during the past two months by several important groups of workers has brought the government to the brink of declaring a state of emergency, led to a sharp government defeat in Parliament last month, and has left Callaghan's tough pay policy in shambles.* Wage settlements during the rest of the current pay round, which almost certainly will be in excess of the guidelines, are likely to reinforce the trend toward double digit inflation and force the government to introduce unpopular contractionary fiscal and monetary measures in the April budget.

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Although the effects of the current strikes--particularly on the economic side--probably have been exaggerated in the press, they are serious, and the political impact is likely to be considerable. The government's seeming inability to handle the situation has damaged its credibility. Callaghan's popularity has dropped and the Conservatives, who have jumped more than seven points ahead of Labor in the polls, are effectively adding to the government's misery.

*The current truckers' strike is the most serious and debilitating, but strikes and industrial action are either in progress now or are threatened by workers in the water supply industry, manual workers employed by local communities, health service workers, railroad workers, civil servants, coal miners, electricity workers, and others. Although the situation eased somewhat this week because an end to the truckers' strike seems imminent and rail and water workers have temporarily agreed not to strike, the government's troubles are far from over and are likely to intensify again in the next several weeks.

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The Government's Dilemma: Which Way to Jump

The government is in a difficult position as it attempts to deal with the strikes and, more importantly, to find some common ground with the unions on a broad number of issues. On the one hand, Callaghan has gotten tough with the unions, hoping to shore up the government's faltering electoral prospects and preempt Conservative He reminds the unions of their responsibility attacks. to the community, warns against seeking excessive wage demands, and promises that the government will attempt to pursue its anti-inflation goals by other means--even if this means a stiff tax increase and a wage and price In the truckers' strike, he has condemned freeze. "secondary picketing" -- the picketing of firms not directly involved in the strike--and attempted to get unions voluntarily to stop the practice.*

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Callaghan can only go so far with the tough approach, despite its apparent popularity with the electorate, since he runs the risk of alienating further both the Labor Party's already aroused left wing and its powerful trade union section. In an attempt to placate the unions, restore a measure of industrial peace, and keep the party together, he has offered relaxed guidelines for the lowest paid workers, promised to extend comparability (by which public employees would be allowed to violate the wage guidelines in order to equalize their pay with private sector employees), and said a bill would be introduced soon to curb price increases. To date, these programs have not been accepted by union leaders or employers.

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As in 1974, however, Callaghan hopes to resurrect the social contract as the main vehicle in trying to calm the situation, define the broad working relationship with the unions, and convince a skeptical public in a runup to the general election that he and the Labor Party are still the best qualified to handle the unions. The basic ideas for a revived social contract are contained

*During the weekend, a high court declared secondary picketing illegal and ordered the truckers to cease. In the past, however, court decisions have not restrained union activity.

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in the TUC - Labor Party joint paper "Into the Eighties: An Agreement," and negotiations are going on with the TUC leadership now in an attempt to find a common formula for wage and price increases and union conduct. Union leaders have been cool toward the idea of a social contract for several months, however; in addition, even if an agreement can be reached, it is not at all certain that the individual unions and the rank and file will accept it. The union leaders, who are extremely sensitive in pressure from below, already have rejected renewed government suggestions to abandon free collective bargaining and will be reluctant to enter future restrictive agreements.

The Conservatives: Also, Which Way to Jump

During the past year, Conservative policy toward the unions, which is spelled out broadly in the party's election manifesto, has been to foster reconciliation and dispel the lingering effects of the hostility of the early 1970s. Looking toward the election, and hoping to pick up substantial support among rank-and-file trade unionists, party spokesmen have insisted that no major industrial relations changes are planned. They have also claimed that a Tory government, while keeping open the option to impose wage restrictions, would be more sympathetic than the Labor government to free collective bargaining, especially if linked to increased industrial efficiency and productivity. Party leaders clearly were attempting to emphasize that the Tories could get along with the unions and dispel the party's "union bashing" image.

During the current crisis much of this Conservative strategy has become suspect. The party has attempted to capitalize on Callaghan's dilemma and the potential electoral benefits—which now seem more promising than reconciliation with the unions—by attacking the government's handling of the situation, condemning what it sees as the serious abuses of union power and offering to help restore order for the sake of the country. In several recent, highly effective appeals—intended to exploit popular discontent with union tactics—the Conservatives have raised issues reminiscent of the arguments used to justify passage of the ill-fated Industrial Relations Act and, indeed, of the legislation that had been proposed to curb union power in 1969 under the Laborite Wilson.

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Arguments about the basic rights and responsibilities of unions, which had been absent from the recent Tory arsenal, again have begun to surface: no right to strike in essential services; the use of secret ballots in union voting (intended to scale down the authority of leftists); outlawing of secondary picketing; and so on. If the Conservatives win the next election, they probably will attempt to convert some of the tough rhetoric into law. It is unlikely, however, that they would attempt to do so via a highly controversial, single, all-encompassing piece of legislation such as the Industrial Relations Act. They are much more likely to attack some of the more glaring abuses of union power, especially those the public has found particularly offensive.

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Impact on the Election Schedule

Callaghan will attempt to gauge the impact of the current industrial crisis--both in Parliament and on the electorate--in determining when to schedule a general election. For the next several weeks, particularly if the strike situation subsides, a threat to the government's survival in Parliament appears to be minimal. Callaghan has been able to rely on support from the Scottish and Welsh Nationalists and the Ulster Unionists to defeat several recent Conservative attempts to unseat the government. But minor party support will become increasingly unreliable as time passes, and the government probably will not be able to rely on it past the spring.

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Callaghan's ability to survive in Parliament and to call an election at a time favorable--or at least less damaging--to the Labor Party depends in large measure on public perception of the government's handling of the trade unions, the industrial crisis and the economy. There is no doubt that the government's standing in the polls has dropped, but if the strikes subside and the industrial scene remains relatively calm, the government may be able to regain some of its lost popularity quickly enough to hold an election in the spring, just after the registry of new voters is published and before the economy sours and an unpopular budget is introduced. If Labor fortunes are still low in the spring, Callaghan may be tempted to postpone the election to the fall, despite the risk of losing minor party support in Parliament.

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NATO: Recent Developments in the Theater Nuclear Weapons Debate The strategic implications of the theater nuclear weapons issue are increasingly being debated in Europe. Political commentators assert that the issue raises questions about the firmness of the US commitment to the defense of Europe, and they are beginning to link the	
question of theater nuclear weapons to the shape of NATO's nuclear doctrine and the future of French and British nuclear forces. As the debate broadens, it is likely to be conducted on moral and environmental as well as strategic grounds; it could become linked with the unsettled	
neutron bomb question	25X1
The Alliance itself is wrestling with many of these questions. A report of the NATO Nuclear Planning Group's political implementation team, issued last month, stressed that the modernization of theater nuclear forces should not blur the distinction between conventional and nuclear war and that the purpose of these forces will still be to deter an aggressor, not to engage him. The report suggests that reduced collateral damage will make these systems serve this role even better, since NATO will pose a more credible threat to advancing Warsaw Pact forces. Implicit in this report is an emphasis on the continued close linkage between theater nuclear forces and the US strategic deterrent, and thus on the continued strength of the US involvement in the defense of Europe.	25X1
In a recent <u>Le Monde</u> article, however, security affairs analyst Jacques Isnard suggests that the United States is using new theater nuclear programs to loosen its commitment to Europe. Isnard charges both superpowers with trying to make their allies assume larger	¢
battlefield roles and spend more on defense. He raises the specter of a Europe mutilated while the superpowers	-
assess their positions from afar.	25X1

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Isnard also questions the process of strategic arms limitation talks (SALT). SALT I, he argues, permitted each superpower a small anti-ballistic-missile force for protection against small (that is, British and French) nuclear forces; SALT II would protect the security of each side's central systems; SALT III may be designed to monitor and neutralize smaller nuclear powers. Thinking of this sort could be one of the reasons France is refusing to have its systems included in SALT III negotiations.

A Manchester Guardian editorial takes a very different view. Recognizing the need for new strategic and theater weapons, the editorial urges Britain to modernize its own deterrent by means of air-launched cruise missiles deployed on a version of the European airbus. While admitting that some will see larger European forces as enabling the Americans to modify their commitment, the Guardian claims that new theater nuclear weapons will actually be better integrated into Alliance planning than their predecessors. In order to ensure US involvement, the editor suggests that relatively few systems be built and that these serve as replacements for present European deployments, not additions to them.

Both Isnard and the <u>Guardian</u> editorial writer are arguing issues that will require decisions fairly soon, since both France and Britain are in the process of choosing follow-on systems for their present nuclear deterrents. Prime Minister Callaghan estimates that the British decision (cruise missiles versus submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs)) will be made within two years. French choices (mobile ICBM's vs. cruise missiles) have already come under scholarly as well as public discussion.

Inevitably, however, the debate on these issues will take on an ethical as well as a strategic dimension.

NATO Secretary General Luns recently made it clear that he is aware of this when he referred to theater nuclear modernization in the course of comments on a Dutch demonstration against the enhanced radiation warhead. The development of new or modernized theater systems will probably be fought by the same people who oppose the neutron bomb and with the same fervor. If the enhanced radiation warhead is still an issue--either because a

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decision to deploy has been made or because the question is still up in the airlinkage between the two debates will be logical. In fact, even if enhanced radiation warheads are rejected, memories of the previous controversy could be dredged up for public consumption. Piet Heil, a columnist for the leftist Dutch paper Vrije Volk, recently urged demonstrators to remember that the neutron bomb issue is only one part of the general disarmament question.

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Foreign Policy in the Finnish Election	25X1
Foreign policy will be an issue in the parliamentary elections in Finland scheduled for 18-19 March, much to the displeasure of President Kekkonen, whose formulation of foreign policy traditionally has been unquestioned. Kekkonen believes his good performance in last year's presidential election once again registered approval of his personal conduct of foreign affairs and his decision to keep foreign policy out of partisan politics. A series of events involving the JSSR, however, may have convinced the voters that for-	
eign policy requires their attention	25X1

Finnish Foreign Policy

The Finnish Constitution gives the President primary responsibility for foreign policy. Since Kekkonen became president in 1956, he has worked at establishing close personal association and regular communications with Soviet leaders in the belief that this approach would provide maximum independence for Finland. accepted Moscow's need for security on its borders and has taken Soviet sensitivities into account by maintaining a military establishment capable of denying Finnish territory to would-be invaders of the Soviet Union, muffling anti-Communist expression and accepting some economic and cultural ties with Moscow. At the same time, however, Kekkonen has tried to balance these requirements with the development of Western ties, including close relations with the other Nordic countries, association in the European Free Trade Association, and an active neutral posture in international organizations.

The Soviet Presence

The Finns have had a series of reminders of the Soviet proximity in the past year or so. Moscow's propaganda efforts linking the 60th anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution and the birth of an independent

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Finnish nation certainly reinforced perennial Finnish anxiety about Soviet hegemony. Then at the Finnish national celebrations in Helsinki, Soviet Premier Kosygin publicly harangued the Nordic Prime Ministers and especially Norway's Nordli about NATO activities in the Nordic area. The outburst was read in Finland as a threat to invoke the 1948 Fenno-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance, which provides for military cooperation in the event of a threat to the USSR through Finland. Soviet Defense Minister Ustinov underscored this interpretation last summer when he proposed joint military exercises as a response to NATO

exercises in Norway.

The Finn's

sensitivities about their Soviet connections were further raised by the repeated use of the term Finlandization as a pejorative word implying servility toward Moscow by West German politicians in preelection debates last fall.

The Finns probably also feel that their country's international status as a neutral has slipped from the high point achieved during the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. The Western response to Kekkonen's renewed drive for a Nordic nuclear free zone, which implied the proposal served Soviet ends, may have fed the feeling.

Voter Opinion

Although polls have shown increasingly conservative responses on party affiliations, most observers believed that the electorate was generally trying to convey its desire for a more conservative domestic policy. In a Gallup poll published in December, however, direct foreign policy questions were asked, and responses showed an overwhelming opposition to closer ties with the East. More than one in three of those polled thought Finland's present foreign policy already tilted too far in that direction.

Parliamentary candidates from the major parties will not debate foreign policy openly or formally. Voters will identify candidates' positions by past activities and current associates. Each party, even the Communist

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front, has members identified to some extent with the West who have shown support for specific positions in foreign policy that would fit the voters' present mood. Monthly polls on party preference indicate most voters still believe they will be able to express their conservatism within their traditional party, but some will move to the right. The movement could add two or three seats to the Moderate Party's parliamentary representation and that would make it difficult--or embarrassing-to continue to exclude it from a post-election cabinet.

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Excluding the Moderate Party from government has been a basic part of Kekkonen's policy out of deference to the Soviets since the mid-1960s. For the past year, however, he has tried to help the Moderates cast off their anti-Communist roots to make them acceptable as part of a governing coalition. He believes the government should represent a national consensus to deal with the country's severe economic problems and to weather the possible tumult as political leaders try to agree on his successor.

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The Soviet Hand in the Election

The Soviets let their position on the coming Finnish elections be known in an article this month in the propaganda journal Novoye vremya that associated the Moderate Party with anti-Soviet, even Nazi, policies. Although the article claimed that Finland's socialist parties were the ones opposed to the party's participation in government, Moscow underscored the "negative consequences for foreign policy" that would likely result should the Moderates come into the government.

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The independent Finns probably will not shift their votes to accommodate Soviet views. The strength of conservatism in the vote will undoubtedly influence decisions by Kekkonen and others in the Finnish Government in the postelection period, but Soviet sensitivities will continue to influence those decisions as well.

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Switzerland: The Politics of Defense

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The visit to the United States next week of Swiss Defense Minister Gnaegi underscores the growing uneasiness in Bern about Switzerland's future in Europe. Gnaegi will be shopping for an extensive array of sophisticated arms and weapons systems for the modernization of the Swiss armed forces over the next five years. The new accent on a strong military capability is in line with the activist approach adopted in foreign policy in 1976 and reflects the determination of the Swiss to safeguard their interests in international affairs.



Rudolf Gnaegi

Gnaegi, who is scheduled to be in Washington from 4 to 8 February, is certain to play up Switzerland's strategic position on NATO's southern flank. The Swiss are worried about the unsettled situations in Turkey and Iran, the uncertain futures of Spain and Portugal, and the strong Communist movements in France and Italy. Bern sees Europe--particularly West Germany and the Scandinavian countries--increasingly threatened by Soviet arms expansion at a time when it believes the major West European powers show scant determination to meet the threat. Leery of becoming involved with the West Germans,

the Swiss find themselves with little alternative but to turn to the United States.

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Last year the Swiss defense program focused on improving antitank defense and expanding the tank force. A Swiss Army study released in November, however, calls for improvement in air defense and acquisition of airmobile antitank forces. Such improvements are necessary,

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according to Swiss military commentators, if the Swiss hope to prevent the Soviets from using Switzerland as a shortcut through NATO's southern flank.	25X1
This study, citing the potential strategic and technical challenges of guaranteeing Swiss security into the 1990s, calls for modification of the traditionally passive role that Swiss military forces have played for the past 20 years. Civil defense programs, with the accent on hardened facilities, have long served as the cornerstone of the country's defense policy. Switzerland has fully equipped shelters for 80 percent of its 6.3 million residents. In addition, all strategic materials, munitions, petroleum supplies, food, and medical facilities are in hardened shelters scattered throughout the country.	25X1
The civil defense measures are supplemented by a small, well-trained army of nine divisions, backed up by 600,000 reservistsequivalent to 12 divisions and the largest reserve force in Western Europe. The reserves can be mobilized in two to three days and, because they keep their weapons and equipment at their homes, can be deployed quickly. They are also well-trained; virtually every Swiss male undergoes intermittent service and training between the ages of 19 to 50.	
These programs do not come cheap. In 1977, the Swiss spent 3.2 percent of their gross national product on defense; this total does not include the sums expended by the cantons and communities for maintenance of local military installations.	25X1
Diplomatic Activism	
The shift to a more aggressive military strategy is consistent with recent changes in Swiss foreign policy. In late 1976, the Swiss Government concluded that Bern would have to take on a more activist role if Switzerland intended to remain in the mainstream of international affairs. Up to that point, economic considerations had been predominant, with government officials responsible for economic affairs actually determining substantive foreign policy.	25X1

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There are many critics of this so-called new style in foreign policy, particularly in the Swiss Parliament, which by and large continues to favor the traditionally passive role. There also is considerable resistance from the Swiss public; in 1976 voters rejected a proposal to increase aid to developing countries, and in 1977 public opinion polls showed that the populace remained skeptical about the value of joining the United Nations.

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The Swiss Government, however, concerned that Switzerland will be left out of West European and US calculations as institutional channels of cooperation proliferate, is determined to play a more active role, including joining the United Nations. Foreign Minister Aubert frequently has publicly stressed the merits of UN membership, which he declares is needed if Switzerland is to "remain in the game." The Swiss are also worried about losing their voice in such issues as the North-South dialogue and the debate over South Africa, topics increasingly argued in the United Nations.

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